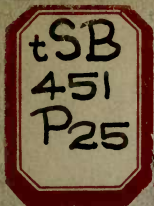


In Praise of Old Gardens



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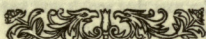
OF
ANITA D. S. BLAKE

IN PRAISE
OF OLD
GARDENS



VERNON
LEE

M^{rs} Anson Blake
from K-B.S.
Christmas 1921.



IN PRAISE OF OLD GARDENS



Some starlit garden grey with dew,
Some chamber flushed with wine and fire,
What matters where, so I and you
Are worthy our desire?

Behind, a past that scolds and jeers
For ungirt loins and lamps unlit ;
In front the unmanageable years,
The trap upon the Pit ;

Think on the shame of dreams for deeds,
The scandal of unnatural strife,
The slur upon immortal needs,
The treason done to life :

Arise ! no more a living lie,
And with me quicken and control
Some memory that shall magnify
The universal Soul.

W. E. HENLEY

Taget, Violet
..

VERNON LEE, *pen*
AND OTHERS

IN PRAISE OF OLD
GARDENS



PORTLAND MAINE
THOMAS B MOSHER
MDCCCCXII

VERNON LEE

AND OTHERS

IN THEATRE ON LONDON

THEATRE



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FOREWORD



Leaf by leaf the roses fall,
Drop by drop the springs run dry,
One by one, beyond recall,
Summer beauties fade and die ;
But the roses bloom again,
And the springs will gush anew
In the pleasant April rain,
And the summer's sun and dew.

So in hours of deepest gloom,
When the springs of gladness fail,
And the roses in their bloom
Droop like maidens wan and pale,
We shall find some hope that lies
Like a silent germ apart,
Hidden far from careless eyes,
In the garden of the heart.

CAROLINE DANA HOWE



FOREWORD

OF the making of many books concerning gardens there would seem to be no end, and rightly so. What I have desired to present in this little collection is a matter of personal preference and could easily have been expanded to far more generous proportions had space permitted. It seemed, however, to reprint the well-known utterances of Lord Bacon and Abraham Cowley, to say nothing of the Greek and Latin classics that might be drawn upon, was merely to go over well known ground instead of turning one's feet into comparatively untrodden paths and seeking "fresh woods and pastures new." I fear, indeed, it may be but one-half love of nature that arises to the surface in such a simple scheme, begotten by a very real love of literary ex-

FOREWORD

pression concerning natural beauties of field and lonely flower. But if I love not gardens more the poetry and pathos of old abandoned gardens is unspeakably near and dear to my heart.

One would fain go back to some old world garth, such as Morris once lived in and wrote about, or such as Rossetti had in mind, which, perhaps is best of all described by Swinburne *In a Forsaken Garden* wherewith our book opens. What follows by the Hon. Mrs. Boyle, Vernon Lee, and Rosamund Marriott Watson is born of that selfsame love of beauty, even of beauty in decay, and is all akin to the loveliness of the rose which, sprung from earth's bosom, after its little season returns to dust. "*But the rose will bloom again*"—and in these essays there is an enduring wistfulness of expression as delicate as the fragile blooms that called them forth. I know not where to find anything

FOREWORD

more poignant than what one may read into *Old Italian Gardens*. The rose of beauty has blossomed in many another pleasaunce, but in "E. V. B.'s" charming essay and in the late Rosamund Watson's *The Road to Spring* little is omitted "in far-reaching sweetness" that goes to the praise of gardens.

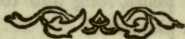
Lastly the brief prose poem by Dr. John Brown has an appeal to me, at least, all the more lasting because I once visited *Inch-mahome*, and have seen in sense and in spirit what he so beautifully imagined was the actual spot where the baby queen, the tragic Mary of later years, long ago took her childish pleasures.

I think I should love a walled garden best of all; for did I not have access to one for a few brief days, belonging to my dear and venerable friend John Loder, Esq., of Woodbridge, Suffolk, England, and in a nearby estate, we together paced the "quarterdeck" so well

FOREWORD

known to all lovers of Edward FitzGerald. To revive that episode is one of the pleasures of memory which may well stay with me until "Finis itself comes to an end, and the Infinite begins."

T. B. M.



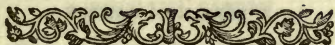


A FORSAKEN GARDEN



In deep wet ways by grey old gardens
Fed with sharp spring the sweet fruit
 hardens ;
They know not what fruits wane or
 grow ;
Red summer burns to the utmost ember ;
They know not, neither can remember,
The old years and flowers they used to
 know.

A. C. SWINBURNE



A FORSAKEN GARDEN

I*N a coign of the cliff between low-
land and highland,
At the sea-down's edge between
windward and lee,
Walled round with rocks as an
inland island,
The ghost of a garden fronts the
sea.*

*A girdle of brushwood and thorn
encloses
The steep square slope of the
blossomless bed
Where the weeds that grew green
from the graves of its roses
Now lie dead.*

*The fields fall southward, abrupt
and broken,
To the low last edge of the long
lone land.
If a step should sound or a word be
spoken,
Would a ghost not rise at the
strange guest's hand?*

A FORSAKEN GARDEN

*So long have the grey bare walks
lain guestless,
Through branches and briers if a
man make way,
He shall find no life but the sea-
wind's, restless
Night and day.*

*The dense hard passage is blind
and stifled
That crawls by a track none turn
to climb
To the strait waste place that the
years have rifled
Of all but the thorns that are
touched not of time.
The thorns he spares when the rose
is taken ;
The rocks are left when he wastes
the plain.
The wind that wanders, the weeds
wind-shaken,
These remain.*

*Not a flower to be prest of the foot
that falls not ;
As the heart of a dead man the
seed-plots are dry ;*

A FORSAKEN GARDEN

*From the thicket of thorns whence
the nightingale calls not,
Could she call, there were never
a rose to reply.*

*Over the meadows that blossom and
wither*

*Rings but the note of a sea-bird's
song;*

*Only the sun and the rain come
hither*

All year long.

*The sun burns sere and the rain
dishevels*

*One gaunt bleak blossom of scent-
less breath.*

*Only the wind here hovers and
revels*

*In a round where life seems bar-
ren as death.*

*Here there was laughing of old,
there was weeping,*

*Haply, of lovers none ever will
know,*

*Whose eyes went seaward a hundred
sleeping*

Years ago.

A FORSAKEN GARDEN

*Heart handfast in heart as they
stood, "Look thither,"*

*Did he whisper? "Look forth
from the flowers to the sea;
For the foam-flowers endure when
the rose-blossoms wither,*

*And men that love lightly may
die — but we?"*

*And the same wind sang and the
same waves whitened,*

*And or ever the garden's last
petals were shed,*

*In the lips that had whispered, the
eyes that had lightened,*

Love was dead.

*Or they loved their life through,
and then went whither?*

*And were one to the end — but
what end who knows?*

*Love deep as the sea as a rose must
wither,*

*As the rose-red seaweed that
mocks the rose.*

*Shall the dead take thought for the
dead to love them?*

A FORSAKEN GARDEN

*What love was ever as deep as a
grave?*

*They are loveless now as the grass
above them*

Or the wave.

*All are at one now, roses and lovers,
Not known of the cliffs and the
fields and the sea.*

*Not a breath of the time that has
been hovers*

*In the air now soft with a sum-
mer to be.*

*Not a breath shall there sweeten
the seasons hereafter*

*Of the flowers or the lovers that
laugh now or weep,*

*When as they that are free now of
weeping and laughter*

We shall sleep.

A. C. SWINBURNE



And that was the first of the

"Garden of the Future"

Which the future world will see

And which the future world will see

And which the future world will see

And which the future world will see

And which the future world will see

And which the future world will see

And which the future world will see

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And which the future world will see



THE PRAISE OF GARDENS



My dream is of a Library in a Garden! In the very centre of the garden away from house or cottage, but united to it by a pleached alley or pergola of vines or roses, an octagonal book-tower like Montaigne's rises upon arches forming an harbour of scented shade. Between the book-shelves, windows at every angle, as in Pliny's Villa library, opening upon a broad gallery supported by pillars of "faire carpenter's work," around which cluster flowering creepers, follow the course of the sun in its play upon the landscape. "Last stage of all," a glass dome gives gaze upon the stars by night, and the clouds by day: "les nuages . . . les nuages qui passent . . . là bas . . . les merveilleux nuages!" And in this βιβλιοκημιος—this Garden of Books—*Sui et Amicorum*, would pass the coloured days and the white nights, "not in quite blank forgetfulness, but in continuous dreaming, only half-veiled by sleep."

A. FORBES SIEVEKING



THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

A GARDEN!—The word is in itself a picture, and what pictures it reveals! All through the days of childhood the garden is our fairy-ground of sweet enchantment and innocent wonder. From the first dawn of thought, when we learned our simple lessons of Eden and its loss, and seemed to see the thornless garden, watered with clear streams, beautiful with spreading trees, and the train of unnamed beasts and birds meekly passing before their spotless lord; and then beyond, far onward to that other garden beloved by the Man of Sorrows, Gethsemane, where we could never picture the blossoming of roses or murmurous hum of summer bees, but only the sombre garden walks, and One kneeling among the olives, and dark, heavy

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

drops upon the grass. And near to this, the garden of the Sepulchre—in a dewy dawnlight, angel-haunted. These were our Gardens of the Soul. In later years the mists of those older, holier spots wear away as snow-wreaths in the vivid brilliance of the Gardens of Poetry. Then, dreamlike, from sapphire seas arose the Gardens of the Hesperides, and we beheld the white-vestured maidens as they danced around the golden-fruited, dragon-guarded tree. Then bloomed for us the gardens of mediæval Italy. The Poets' garden of cypress and lemon, of marble stairs and sparkling fountains, with all their moonlight mirth and sorrow; ilex-groves of song and silver-threaded laughter; visions of Rimini, or gay Boccaccio's tales. Then did we linger where high-piping nightingales sang to the Persian Rose in the Gulistan of Saâdi; felt the pure sunlight shine in a little wil-

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

derness of roses, or the green shade that lay round the apple-trees of Andrew Marvell; or in the garden of the Sensitive Plant, we followed the shadowy steps of the Lady, our souls entranced with the love of every flower she loved. They are all beautiful, these Gardens of Poetry! and through the midst of them flows the broad stream of Memory, isled with fair liliated lawns, fringed with willowy forests and whispering reeds. And not less beautiful than these ideal shades are the gardens which live unchanged and unchanging in many a painted picture within the heart. Real, and not less ideal, is the remembrance of gardens we have seen: seen once, it may be, and never since forgotten.

“Un souvenir heureux est peut-être sur
terre

Plus vrai que le bonheur.”

So, lovely as truth, crystal-clear as a poet's thought, are the earthly

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

Edens our eyes beheld in the years that are past. How can we forget the gardens of queenly Genoa, in the days ere yet she was discrowned? of Florence, of Rome and Albano and Tivoli? The palm-gardens of Bordighera, where periwinkles — *fiori dei morte* — rain down their blue from the overflowing laps of ancient palms, or wander in smiles about the rugged roots; the trellised pergolas and anemoned lawns of Mortola; or those strange island-gardens, Isola Madre of Maggiore, and terraced Isola Bella? Long indeed is the lovely list. Think back into the days that were, and remember them. . . . How they live green and fresh and sweet in the bloom and the glow of their eternal summer! For you, their skies are ever blue, their roses never fade. Winter has never silenced the splash and flow of their fountains, nor chilled the green from one leaf in their deep

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

groves. The lemon, ripening in pale gold, still hangs ungathered against the southern terrace, where scarlet passion-flowers burn in drifted fire-spots. The peacock, sunning himself upon the stone balustrade, shakes out his emerald glories, while you loiter along the flowery borders of his kingdom; and you know that violets hide somewhere in the grass, for the very sunshine is impregnated with their perfume. Or perchance in fancy you may tread again the narrow pathway that winds around the rocky sea-wall at old Monaco. There, for you, the globes of red geranium reflect still, warm shadows about the names of lovers long since forgot or dead, wrought upon the tablet leaves of aloes or of cactus. There mesembryanthemums shine still, sunned over as of old with rayed discs of red and yellow, while basking lizards at your approach rustle away under the leaves. Lean over the low

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

parapet wall and watch the waves dash in white foam against the jagged rocks below. The old cliff blooms out into cistus and spikes of purple stocks; midway the sea-birds scream and play above the little fishing-boats, tossing like fairy nutshells on the crisp blue summer sea. From the sunny Mediterranean and that narrow strip of hanging garden, dream on into the black cypress shades of Tuscany.

In all Italy — the land of flowers, the garden of the world — there are no gardens more stately, nor any nobler cypress-trees, than at Villa d'Este of Tivoli. In the spring, by the straight smooth ways under the ilexes and cypresses, all day the golden gloom is made rosy where ever and anon red Judas-trees shower down their bloom. Marble stairs lead up through terraced heights to paved walks under the Palazzo walls. There the air is faint with rich

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

fragrance of the orange-trees. The lofty spires of ancient cypresses reach up above the topmost terrace; far below in the garden, between their dark ranks, sparkle the upspringing fountains. Beyond, above the tall cypresses, rise brown crumbling walls of the old town, piled up with open loggie and arched gates and overshadowing roofs; and high over these, great barren hills crowned with ruined fortresses and shattered keeps. To the west rolls out the ocean of the wide Campagna, undulating far away where Rome is lost in the sunset. Dream on, until you sigh with the wondrous sweetness of Rome herself in the wild wood-garden of the Vatican, where in April days thousands of odorous cyclamen flowers, flush with crimson all the moss beneath the trees. Dream on, till you see once more the swaying of the tall pines and bathe your steps in tracts of flowery grass in

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

the green Pamphili Doria, and watch the mystic fountain, most like the form of an inconstant spirit, like a pale blue robed Undine uncertain if to leave her source, trembling betwixt desire and fear.

Fain would we linger in the gardens of Portugal, under the sweet-scented camellias of Cintra—lost in reverie amid her rose-wreathed thickets. Strange is the remembrance of the beautiful Montserrat cathedral water-aisles, whose torrents foam down in long cascades beneath the high-arched tree-ferns. And in Spain, like a scene in the “Arabian Nights,” comes back to us the old Moorish garden of Granada, with marble-lined canal and lofty arcades of trimmed yew, topped with crescents, pyramids, and crowns.

Those are our gardens of past joy. Yet others still exist, whose memory in secret cherished is shrouded with a tender mystery.

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

Lovelier than all gardens we have known, graced with the far-off charm of the unattainable are they, the gardens we have wished for, but have never seen. Words cannot paint them, for memory sets no copy: yet the longing for them does still possess our hearts with visions of their unknown beauty. Long ago, there was a garden such as this: a garden I never saw, whose image haunts me with a dim regret. It was in the South of France. The hot, white road brought us at last to the foot of a rocky steep. A shepherd boy pointed to the stony path we had to climb, winding up through thorny ways, amongst the cistus and wild lavender. High on the summit stood the small pink château with its chapel, and the garden walled all round. The chapel door stood wide open and showed within the altar with its faded roses and its tinselled Virgin. But the garden door in

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

the wall was shut and locked. There on the thymy ledge outside the garden wall, beside the worn step of the blind shut door, we sat down among the irises. In the still hush of afternoon we listened to the gentle stir of leaves among the walnuts and evergreen oaks that overtopped the wall. Pale pink petals floated down from the china roses clambering about the trees, and fell softly at our feet. Sometimes there came a little sound of tinkling waters running over into some marble basin; or the fitful melody of a nightingale, or the voice of the turtle was heard somewhere within the thick shade, and the scent of new-blown orange-flowers ever and again just touched the air. Sometimes a great black wild bee heavily laden passed over from the other side, droned for a moment in the purple irises, and drifted away into space. Below the rock, and away as far as the eye could

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

reach, a grey mist of olive woods filled all the valley, veiling the mountain-sides till lost at last in lilac hollows of the hills. But the garden gate in the wall of Castellar opened never to us; and never save in fancy have we crossed its sunny threshold nor wandered down the close-clipt alleys, or ever seen the sculptured nymphs gleam white amid the ilex-groves — its fountains or the bloom of its summer flowers.

And yet other gardens there are, like none of these. They are no "Adonis Gardens" whose flowers quickly bloom and quickly die. They are not laid out for pastime, nor for our joy in hours of idleness. The flower-beds are narrow, and often the best bloom of them is withered. But the flowers are not for delight; they are all for remembrance. Tears have watered them; Love bound the amaranth in each faded wreath. To most of us it may be that

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

some small spot in the Garden of the Lord is dearer than the finest pleasure-garden; for here we lent to the Heavenly Husbandman the light of our eyes, the flower of our lives. The beautiful feeling that would make into a garden, the place where the dead rest, is well-nigh universal, and finds, perhaps, its best and most natural expression in England. Many a little country churchyard, far and near, even to the remote corners of our land, has its well-kept borders, and is weekly drest and bright with fresh flowers. And this is as it should be. For Pride or any other reason, the costliest monument is raised; but only Love will plant roses about the tomb, or weave for it the crown of lilies: it is Love only that will lay some poor flower upon the little green mound. The Poor have no need of carven headstones; they know well the graves of their dead, and thither will

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

they bring in all simplicity their best and gayest from the cottage plot, so that on a summer Sunday the churchyard is like a garden. It is more than a garden! it is "Mazar"—as in the Arabic phrase for the grave—"the place of resort."

And how sweet is such a garden, should you find it in the wood! It was June in the New Forest. We had wandered out of the sandy forest track into a green labyrinth of nutty ways. Beyond, the beech-wood stretched in heavy masses. Hidden deep in the hazel underwood, a thrush sang as they sing only when summer is young. We too were young, and we sang all together. On a sudden sounded, quite close at hand, the harsh notes of a band of music. The village musicians had found us out; and they came, and with "fiddle, fife, and drum" broke up the quiet of our cool retreat. Hush! suddenly pene-

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

trating through and above the jangling tunes, rose the deep tones of a funeral bell. Again and again at solemn intervals the bell intoned through all the light discordance, while the thrush amidst the hazels unheeding still sang on. The knell, wherever it might be, sounded clear and strong through depths of woodland leaves. We thought of Hans Andersen's tale of the bell that pierced the night among the trees, and none knew from whence, and none ever found its secret, but the king's son and the peasant lad. Unlike the story, we had not far to seek. Soon was found a little churchling in a clearing of the wood. The bell had ceased. In the garden the mourners were departing from a fresh-made grave. Lines of bright *limnanthus* and *nemophila* on either side the path gave back the sunshine. At the open door stood the white-haired sexton with his keys. Entering in out of the

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

golden sunshine the church seemed to be a space of darkness where the windows glowed in colours richly bright, like gardens of the blest in the land that is afar off.

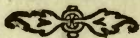
In the praise of gardens which is to be found scattered through the writings of many prose authors of all ages, the most careless reader cannot fail to observe a curious contrast between the older "praise" and that of more recent date. The difference, which is hard to define, lies not so much in style or in the turn of expressions; these would be but the natural outcome of different literary periods. It lies in the mind and sentiments of the writers on the subject. The thoughts of men who loved gardens in bygone ages, were coloured no doubt by the kinds of flowers commonly cultivated by them, and the rarity of many as compared with the rich increase and variety we now pos-

THE PRAISE OF GARDENS

sess. Still, besides this, there is an unconscious poetry, a keenness of observation and sensation, and a sort of abandonment to pure enjoyment of trees and flowers and clear waters, in those earlier writings, which to us is unknown. There are quaintly minute descriptions of gardens in the times of Gawain Douglas (1400-1500) which have all the fresh flavour of poetry, and all the enduring fascination of a picture by Quintin Matsys. Even so late as last century, Addison paints the stately gardens he loved, as well as the simple delights of old-fashioned flowers, with a completeness of most finished detail. A choice style, for which modern life finds little time, and which is scarcely found in the best garden literature of to-day.

“E. V. B.”

Huntercombe, 1885.





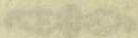
OLD ITALIAN GARDENS



The Triton in the Ilex-wood
Is lonely at Castello.
The snow is on him like a hood,
The fountain-reeds are yellow.

But never Triton sorrowed yet
For weather chill or mellow :
He mourns, my Dear, that you forget
The gardens of Castello !

A. MARY F. ROBINSON





OLD ITALIAN GARDENS

I

THERE are also modern gardens in Italy, and in such I have spent many pleasant hours. But that has been part of my life of reality, which concerns only my friends and myself. The gardens I would speak about are those in which I have lived the life of the fancy, and into which I may lead the idle thoughts of my readers.

It is pleasant to have flowers growing in a garden. I make this remark because there have been very fine gardens without any flowers at all; in fact, when the art of gardening reached its height, it took to despising its original material, as, at one time, people came to sing so well that it was considered vulgar to have any voice. There is a magnificent garden near Pescia, in Tuscany, built

OLD ITALIAN GARDENS

in terraces against a hillside, with wonderful water-works, which give you shower baths when you expect them least; and in this garden, surrounded by the trimmest box hedges, there bloom only imperishable blossoms of variegated pebbles and chalk. That I have seen with my own eyes. A similar garden, near Genoa, consisting of marble mosaics and coloured bits of glass, with a peach tree on a wall, and an old harpsichord on the doorstep to serve instead of bell or knocker, I am told of by a friend, who pretends to have spent her youth in it. But I suspect her to be of supernatural origin, and this garden to exist only in the world of Ariosto's enchantresses, whence she originally hails. To return to my first remark, it is pleasant, therefore, to have flowers in a garden, though not necessary. We moderns have flowers, and no gardens. I must protest against such a state of

OLD ITALIAN GARDENS

things. Still worse is it to suppose that you can get a garden by running up a wall or planting a fence round a field, a wood or any portion of what is vaguely called Nature. Gardens have nothing to do with Nature, or not much. Save the garden of Eden, which was perhaps no more a garden than certain London streets so called, gardens are always primarily the work of man. I say primarily, for these outdoor habitations, where man weaves himself carpets of grass and gravel, cuts himself walls out of ilex or hornbeam, and fits on as roof so much of blue day or of starspecked, moonsilvered night, are never perfect until Time has furnished it all with his weather stains and mosses, and Fancy, having given notice to the original occupants, has handed it into the charge of gentle little owls and furgloved bats, and of other tenants, human in shape, but as shy and solitary as they.

OLD ITALIAN GARDENS

That is a thing of our days, or little short of them. I should be curious to know something of early Italian gardens, long ago; long before the magnificence of Roman Cæsars had reappeared, with their rapacity and pride, in the cardinals and princes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I imagine those beginnings to have been humble; the garden of the early middle ages to have been a thing more for utility than pleasure, and not at all for ostentation. For the garden of the castle is necessarily small; and the plot of ground between the inner and outer rows of walls, where corn and hay might be grown for the horses, is not likely to be given up exclusively to her ladyship's lilies and gillyflowers; salads and roots must grow there, and onions and leeks, for it is not always convenient to get vegetables from the villages below, particularly when there are enemies

OLD ITALIAN GARDENS

or disbanded pillaging mercenaries about; hence, also, there will be fewer roses than vines, pears, or apples, spaliered against the castle wall. On the other hand the burgher of the towns begins by being a very small artisan or shop-keeper, and even when he lends money to kings of England and Emperors, and is part owner of Constantinople, he keeps his house with businesslike frugality. Whatever they lavished on churches, frescoes, libraries, and pageants, the citizens, even of the fifteenth century, whose wives and daughters still mended the linen and waited at table, are not likely to have seen in their villa more than a kind of rural place of business, whence to check factors and peasants, where to store wine and oil; and from whose garden, barely enclosed from the fields, to obtain the fruit and flowers for their table. I think that mediæval poetry and tales have led me to

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this notion. There is little mention in them of a garden as such: the Provençal lovers meet in orchards — “en un vergier sor folha d'albespi” — where the May bushes grow among the almond trees. Boccaccio and the Italians more usually employ the word *orto*, which has lost its Latin signification, and is a place, as we learn from the context, planted with fruit trees and with pot-herbs, the sage which brought misfortune on poor Simona, and the sweet basil which Lisabetta watered, as it grew out of Lorenzo's head, “only with rosewater, or that of orange flowers, or with her own tears.” A friend of mine has painted a picture of another of Boccaccio's ladies, Madonna Dianora, visiting the garden, which (to the confusion of her virtuous stratagem) the enamoured Ansaldo has made to bloom in January by magic arts; a little picture full of the quaint lovely details of Dello's

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wedding chests, the charm of the roses and lilies, the plashing fountains and birds singing against a background of wintry trees and snow-shrouded fields, the dainty youths and damsels treading their way among the flowers, looking like tulips and ranunculus themselves in their fur and brocade. But although in this story Boccaccio employs the word *giardino* instead of *orto*, I think we must imagine that magic flower garden rather as a corner — they still exist on every hillside — of orchard connected with the fields of wheat and olives below by the long tunnels of vine trellis, and dying away into them with the great tufts of lavender and rosemary and fennel on the grassy bank under the cherry trees. This piece of terraced ground along which the water — spouted from the dolphin's mouth or the siren's breasts — runs through walled channels, refreshing impartially

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violets and salads, lilies and tall flowering onions, under the branches of the peach tree and the pomegranate, to where, in the shade of the great pink oleander tufts, it pours out below into the big tank, for the maids to rinse their linen in the evening, and the peasants to fill their cans to water the bedded out tomatoes, and the potted clove-pinks in the shadow of the house.

The Blessed Virgin's garden is like that, where, as she prays in the cool of the evening, the gracious Gabriel flutters on to one knee (hushing the sound of his wings lest he startle her) through the pale green sky, the deep blue-green valley; and you may still see in the Tuscan fields clumps of cypresses clipped wheel shape, which might mark the very spot.

The transition from this orchard-garden, this *orto*, of the old Italian novelists and painters to the architectural garden of the sixteenth

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and seventeenth centuries, is indicated in some of the descriptions and illustrations of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, a sort of handbook of antiquities in the shape of a novel, written by Fra Francesco Colonna, and printed at Venice about 1480. Here we find trees and hedges treated as brick and stone work; walls, niches, colonnades, cut out of ilex and laurel; statues, vases, peacocks, clipped in box and yew; moreover antiquities, busts, inscriptions, broken altars and triumphal arches, temples to the graces and Venus, stuck about the place very much as we find them in the Roman Villas of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But I doubt whether the *Hypnerotomachia* can be taken as evidence of the gardens of Colonna's own days. I think his descriptions are rather of what his archæological lore made him long for, and what came in time, when antiques were

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more plentiful than in the early Renaissance, and the monuments of the ancients could be incorporated freely into the gardens. For the classic Italian garden is essentially Roman in origin; it could have arisen only on the top of ancient walls and baths, its shape suggested by the ruins below, its ornaments dug up in the planting of the trees; and until the time of Julius II. and Leo X., Rome was still a mediæval city, feudal and turbulent, in whose outskirts, for ever overrun by baronial squabbles, no sane man would have built himself a garden; and in whose ancient monuments castles were more to be expected than belvederes and orangeries. Indeed, by the side of quaint arches and temples, and labyrinths which look like designs for a box of toys, we find among the illustrations of Polifilo various charming woodcuts showing bits of vine trellis, of tank and of fountain, on the small

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scale, and in the domestic, quite unclassic style of the Italian burgher's garden. I do not mean to say that the gardens of Lorenzo dei Medici, of Catherine Cornaro near Asolo, of the Gonzagas near Mantua, of the Estensi at Scandiano and Sassuolo, were kitchen gardens like those of Isabella's basil pot. They had waterworks already, and aviaries full of costly birds, and enclosures where camels and giraffes were kept at vast expense, and parks with deer and fishponds; they were the gardens of the castle, of the farm, magnified and made magnificent, spread over a large extent of ground. But they were not, any more than are the gardens of Boiardo's and Ariosto's enchantresses (copied by Spenser) the typical Italian gardens of later days.

And here, having spoken of that rare and learned *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (which, by the way, any one who wishes to be instructed,

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sickened, and bored for many days together, may now read in Monsieur Claudius Popelin's French translation), it is well I should state that for the rest of this dissertation I have availed myself of neither the *British Museum*, nor the *National Library of Paris*, nor the *Library of South Kensington* (the italics seem necessary to show my appreciation of those haunts of learning), but merely of the light of my own poor intellect. For I do not think I care to read about gardens among foolscap and inkstains and printed forms; in fact I doubt whether I care to read about them at all, save in Boccaccio and Ariosto, Spenser and Tasso; though I hope that my readers will be more literary characters than myself.

II

The climate of Italy (moving on in my discourse) renders it difficult and almost impossible to have flowers growing in the ground all through the summer. After the magnificent efflorescence of May and June the soil cakes into the consistence of terra cotta, and the sun, which has expanded and withered the roses and lilies with such marvellous rapidity, toasts everything like so much corn or maize. Very few herbaceous flowers—the faithful, friendly, cheerful zinnias, for instance—can continue blooming, and the oleander, become more brilliantly rose-colour with every additional week's drought, triumph over empty beds. Flowers in Italy are a crop like corn, hemp, or beans; you must be satisfied with fallow soil when they are over. I say these things, learned by some bitter experience of flowerless summers,

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to explain why Italian flower-gardening mainly takes refuge in pots—from the great ornamented lemon-jars down to the pots of carnations, double geraniums, tuberose and jasmines on every wall, on every ledge or window-sill; so much so, in fact, that even the famous sweet basil and with it young Lorenzo's head, had to be planted in a pot. Now this poverty of flower-beds and richness of pots made it easy and natural for the Italian garden to become, like the Moorish one, a place of mere greenery and water, a palace whose fountains plashed in sunny yards walled in with myrtle and bay, in mysterious chambers roofed over with ilex and box.

And this it became. Moderately at first; a few hedges of box and cypress—exhaling its resinous breath in the sunshine—leading up to the long, flat Tuscan house, with its tower or pillared loggia

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under the roof to take the air and dry linen ; a few quaintly cut trees set here and there, along with the twisted mulberry tree where the family drank its wine and ate its fruit of an evening ; a little grove of ilexes to the back, in whose shade you could sleep while the cicadas buzzed at noon ; some cypresses gathered together into a screen, just to separate the garden from the olive yard above ; gradually perhaps a balustrade set at the end of the bowling-green, that you might see, even from a distance, the shimmery blue valley below, the pale-blue distant hills ; and if you had it, some antique statue, not good enough for the courtyard of the town house, set on the balustrade or against the tree ; also, where water was plentiful, a little grotto scooped out under that semicircular screen of cypresses. A very modest place, but differing essentially from the orchard and kitchen garden of the

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mediæval burgher; and out of which came something immense and unique—the classic Roman villa.

For your new garden, your real Italian garden, brings in a new element—that of perspective, architecture, decoration; the trees used as building material, the lie of the land as theatre arrangements, the water as the most docile and multiform stage property. Now think what would happen when such gardens begin to be made in Rome. The Popes and Popes' nephews can enclose vast tracts of land, expropriated by some fine sweeping fiscal injustice, or by the great expropriator, fever, in the outskirts of the town; and there place their casino, at first a mere summer-house, whither to roll of spring evenings in stately coaches and breathe the air with a few friends; then gradually a huge house, with its suits of guests' chambers, stables, chapel,

orangery, collection of statues and pictures, its subsidiary smaller houses, belvederes, circuses, and what not! And around the house His Eminence or His Serene Excellency may lay out his garden. Now go where you may in the outskirts of Rome you are sure to find ruins — great aqueduct arches, temples half-standing, gigantic terrace-works belonging to some baths or palace hidden beneath the earth and vegetation. Here you have naturally an element of architectural ground-plan and decoration which is easily followed: the terraces of quin-cunxes, the symmetrical groves, the long flights of steps, the triumphal arches, the big ponds, come, as it were, of themselves, obeying the order of what is below. And from underground, everywhere, issues a legion of statues, headless, armless, in all stages of mutilation, who are charitably mended, and take their

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place, mute sentinels, white and earth-stained, at every intersecting box hedge, under every ilex grove, beneath the cypresses of each sweeping hillside avenue, wherever a tree can make a niche or a bough a canopy. Also vases, sarcophagi, baths, little altars, columns, reliefs by the score and hundred, to be stuck about everywhere, let into every wall, clapped on the top of every gable, every fountain, stacked up in every empty space.

Among these inhabitants of the gardens of Cæsar, Lucullus, or Sallust, who, after a thousand years' sleep, pierce through the earth into new gardens, of crimson cardinals and purple princes, each fattened on his predecessors' spoils — Medici, Farnesi, Peretti, Aldobrandini, Ludovisi, Rospigliosi, Borghese, Pamphili — among this humble people of stone I would say a word of garden Hermes and their vicissitudes. There they stand, squeezing from

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out their triangular sheath the stout pectorals veined with rust, scarred with corrosions, under the ilexes, whose drip, drip, through all the rainy days and nights of those ancient times and these modern ones has gradually eaten away an eye here, a cheek there, making up for the loss by gilding the hair with lichens, and matting the beard with green ooze; while patched chin, and restored nose, give them an odd look of fierce German duellists. Have they been busts of Cæsars, hastily ordered on the accession of some Tiberius or Nero, hastily sent to alter into Caligula or Galba, or chucked into the Tiber on to the top of the monster Emperor's body after that had been properly hauled through the streets? Or are they philosophers, at your choice, Plato or Aristotle or Zeno or Epicurus, once presiding over the rolls of poetry and science in some noble's or some rhetor's

library? Or is it possible that this featureless block, smiling foolishly with its orbless eye-sockets and worn-out mouth, may have had, once upon a time, a nose from Phidias's hand, a pair of Cupid lips carved by Praxiteles?

III

A book of seventeenth-century prints — "The Gardens of Rome, with their plans raised and seen in perspective, drawn and engraved by Giov: Battista Falda, at the printing-house of Gio: Giacomo de' Rossi, at the sign of Paris, near the church of Peace in Rome" — brings home to one, with the names of the architects who laid them out, that these Roman villas are really a kind of architecture cut out of living instead of dead timber. To this new kind of architecture belongs a new kind of sculpture. The antiques do well in their niches of

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box and laurel under their canopy of hanging ilex boughs; they are, in their weather-stained, mutilated condition, another sort of natural material fit for the artist's use; but the old sculpture being thus in a way assimilated through the operation of earth, wind, and rain, into tree-trunks and mossy boulders, a new sculpture arises undertaking to make of marble something which will continue the impression of the trees and waters, wave its jagged outlines like the branches, twist its supple limbs like the fountains. It is high time that some one should stop the laughing and sniffing at this great sculpture of Bernini and his Italian and French followers, the last spontaneous outcome of the art of the Renaissance, of the decorative sculpture which worked in union with place and light and surroundings. Mistaken as indoor decoration, as free statuary in the sense of the antique,

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this sculpture has after all given us the only works which are thoroughly right in the open air, among the waving trees, the mad vegetation which sprouts under the moist, warm Roman sky, from every inch of masonry and travertine. They are comic of course looked at in all the details, those angels who smirk and gesticulate with the emblems of the passion, those popes and saints who stick out colossal toes and print on the sky gigantic hands, on the parapets of bridges and the gables of churches; but imagine them replaced by fine classic sculpture — stiff mannikins struggling with the overwhelming height, the crushing hugeness of all things Roman; little tin soldiers lost in the sky instead of those gallant theatrical creatures swaggering among the clouds, pieces of wind-torn cloud, petrified for the occasion, themselves! Think of Bernini's Apollo and Daphne, a group unfortu-

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nately kept in a palace room, with whose right angles its every outline swears, but which, if placed in a garden, would be the very summing up of all garden and park impressions in the waving, circling lines; yet not without a niminy piminy restraint of the draperies, the limbs, the hair turning to clustered leaves, the body turning to smooth bark, of the flying nymph and the pursuing god.

The great creation of this Bernini school, which shows it as the sculpture born of gardens, is the fountain. No one till the seventeenth century had guessed what might be the relations of stone and water, each equally obedient to the artist's hand. The mediæval Italian fountain is a tank, a huge wash-tub fed from lions' mouths, as if by taps, and ornamented, more or less, with architectural and sculptured devices. In the Renaissance we get com-

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plicated works of art — Neptunes with tridents throne above sirens squeezing their breasts, and cupids riding on dolphins, like the beautiful fountain of Bologna; or boys poised on one foot, holding up tortoises, like Rafael's Tartarughe of Piazza Mattei; more elaborate devices still, like the one of the villa at Bagnaia, near Viterbo. But these fountains do equally well when dry, equally well translated into bronze or silver: they are wonderful salt-cellars or fruit-dishes; everything is delightful except the water, which spurts in meagre threads as from a garden-hose. They are the fitting ornament of Florence, where there is pure drinking water only on Sundays and holidays, of Bologna, where there is never any at all.

The seventeenth century made a very different thing of its fountains — something as cool, as watery, as the jets which gurgle and splash in Moorish gardens

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and halls, and full of form and fancy withal, the water never alone, but accompanied by its watery suggestion of power and will and whim. They are so absolutely right, these Roman fountains of the Bernini school, that we are apt to take them as a matter of course, as if the horses had reared between the spurts from below and the gushes and trickles above; as if the Triton had been draped with the overflowing of his horn; as if the Moor with his turban, the Asiatic with his veiled fall, the solemn Egyptian river god, had basked and started back with the lion and the seahorse among the small cataracts breaking into foam in the pond, the sheets of water dropping, prefiguring icicles, lazily over the rocks, all stained black by the north winds and yellow by the lichen, all always, always, in those Roman gardens and squares, from the beginning of time, natural objects,

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perfect and not more to be wondered at than the water-encircled rocks of the mountains and seashores. Such art as this cannot be done justice to with the pen; diagrams would be necessary, showing how in every case the lines of the sculpture harmonise subtly, or clash to be more subtly harmonised, with the movement, the immensely varied, absolutely spontaneous movement of the water; the sculptor, become infinitely modest, willing to sacrifice his own work, to make it uninteresting in itself, as a result of the hours and days he must have spent watching the magnificent manners and exquisite tricks of natural waterfalls—nay, the mere bursting alongside of breakwaters, the jutting up between stones, of every trout-stream and milldam. It is not till we perceive its absence (in the fountains, for instance, of modern Paris) that we appreciate this Roman art of

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water sculpture. Meanwhile we accept the fountains as we accept the whole magnificent harmony of nature and art—nature tutored by art, art fostered by nature—of the Roman villas, undulating, with their fringe of pines and oaks, over the hillocks and dells of the Campagna, or stacked up proudly, vineyards and woods all round, on the steep sides of Alban and Sabine hills.

IV

This book of engravings of the villas of the Serene Princes Aldobrandini, Pamphili, Borghese, and so forth, brings home to us another fact, to wit, that the original owners and layers out thereof must have had but little enjoyment of them. There they go in their big coaches, among the immense bows and curtsies of the ladies and gentlemen and dapper ecclesiastics whom they meet; princes in feath-

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ers and laces, and cardinals in silk and ermine. But the delightful gardens on which they are being complimented are meanwhile mere dreadful little plantations, like a nurseryman's squares of cabbages, you would think, rather than groves of ilexes and cypresses, for, alas, the greatest princes, the most magnificent cardinals, cannot bribe time, or hustle him to hurry up.

And thus the gardens were planted and grew. For whom? Certainly not for the men of those days, who would doubtless have been merely shocked could they have seen or foreseen. . . . For their ghosts perhaps? Scarcely. A friend of mine, in whose information on such matters I have implicit belief, assures me that it is not the *whole* ghosts of the ladies and cavaliers of long ago who haunt the gardens; not the ghost of their everyday, humdrum likeness to ourselves, but the

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ghost of certain moments of their existence, certain rustlings, and shimmerings of their personality, their waywardness, momentary transcendent graces and graciousnesses, unaccountable wistfulness and sorrow, certain looks of the face and certain tones of the voice (perhaps none of the steadiest), things that seem to die away into nothing on earth, but which have permeated their old haunts, clung to the statues with the ivy, risen and fallen with the plash of the fountains, and which now exhale in the breath of the honeysuckle and murmur in the voice of the birds, in the rustle of the leaves and the high, invading grasses. There are some verses of Verlaine's, which come to me always, on the melancholy minuet tune to which Monsieur Fauré has set them, as I walk in those Italian gardens, Roman and Florentine, walk in the spirit as well as in the flesh : —

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Votre âme est un paysage choisi
Que vont charmant masques et berga-
masques
Jouant du luth et quasi
Tristes sous leurs déguisements fan-
tasques.

Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur
L'amour vainqueur et la vie opportune,
Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire à leur bonheur ;
Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune,
Au calme clair de lune triste et beau
Qui fait rêver les oiseaux dans les arbres
Et sangloter d'extase les jets d'eau,
Les grands jets d'eau sveltes parmi les
marbres.¹

1 Your soul is as a moonlit landscape fair,
Peopled with maskers delicate and dim,
That play on lutes and dance and have an
air

Of being sad in their fantastic trim.
The while they celebrate in minor strain
Triumphant love, effective enterprise,
They have an air of knowing all is vain,—
And through the quiet moonlight their
songs rise,
The melancholy moonlight, sweet and
lone,
That makes to dream the birds upon the
tree,
And in their polished basins of white stone
The fountains tall to sob with ecstasy.

GERTRUDE HALL.

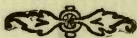
V

And this leads me to wonder what these gardens must be when the key has turned in their rusty gates, and the doorkeeper gone to sleep under the gun hanging from its nail. What must such places be, Mòndragone, for instance, near Frascati, and the deserted Villa Pucci near Signa, during the great May nights, when my own small scrap of garden, not beyond kitchen sounds and servants' lamps, is made wonderful and magical by the scents which rise up, by the song of the nightingales, the dances of the fireflies, copying in the darkness below the figures which are footed by the nimble stars overhead. Into such rites as these, which the poetry of the past practises with the poetry of summer nights, one durst not penetrate, save after leaving one's vulgar flesh, one's habits, one's realities outside the gate.

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And since I have mentioned gates, I must not forget one other sort of old Italian garden, perhaps the most poetical and pathetic—the garden that has ceased to exist. You meet it along every Italian highroad or country lane; a piece of field, tender green with the short wheat in winter, brown and orange with the dried maize husks and seeding sorghum in summer, the wide grass path still telling of coaches that once rolled in; a big stone bench, with sweeping shell-like back under the rosemary bushes; and, facing the road, between solemnly grouped cypresses or stately marshalled poplars, a gate of charming hammered iron standing open between its scroll-work masonry and empty vases, under its covered escutcheon. The gate that leads to nowhere.

VERNON LEE





THE ROAD TO SPRING



In this veiled hush before the next soft
shower,

Listen — 't is he, my Lord the black-
bird sings,

A wizard chanting from his haunted tower
Legends of lost innumerable Springs.

Long, long ago, and far, and far away,
These golden falls, these strange *legatos*
seem

To raise the ghost of a forgotten day,
Or thread the dim maze of some distant
dream.

Between the wet woods and the clouded
skies

His spell is wrought — the immemorial
rune

That charms me back to that lost land
which lies

East of the Sun and westward of the
Moon.

ROSAMUND MARRIOTT WATSON



THE ROAD TO SPRING

THE halcyon days are over: mild and tender interlude of ineffable gentleness, a space of earliest Spring, as it were, but wanting Spring's disquietude. The serene and smiling grace of the low midwinter sun, the milk and turkis skies, the bared beauty of the naked trees, the strange richness of the short emerald grass, so wonderful to eyes already schooled to inexpectancy of Nature's kindness for many weeks to come — all has partaken almost of the nature of a benediction, a respite. The oasis was welcome, and more than welcome; but the long white road lies ahead, the road to Spring, swept by rough winds, blocked now and again by fog and frost and snow, and yet leading, every inch of it, to the desired haven —

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“Over the Mountains of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride, the Shade replied,
If you seek for El Dorado.”

And so we too shall journey on, undaunted by the darkness of the way, even snatching a certain pleasure from its predicaments, and, at times, a swift and sudden joy from some sunlit turn in the highway, some sheltered dip where unsuspected buds may be blowing, fair pledges of the promised land. One needs must take one's happiness where one may chance to find it; and for all its denials and asperities, I am come at last to consider winter, even our surly English winter, as a season by no manner of means so ungracious as it has been painted. There are ameliorations, there are beauties, if you do but choose to see them. All the deciduous trees in the garden have shed their leaves, it is true, but only to reveal the infinite variety and grace of their

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intimate structure. Winter, despite his reputation for seals and secrets, has many disclosures, and this, perhaps, is at once the most interesting and the most pleasing to the eye. Robbed of their green draperies they stand revealed—these trees that summer dresses; while the dim rich evergreens—cypress and laurel, holly, and ivy; the stately groves of rhododendron, with ilex and arbutus, cedar and deodar, and box and yew—stand fast in their dark mail, hugging close their mysteries.

Now it is an old pleasure renewed to note once more how the tall poplar's delicate outer framework aspires, from fragile-seeming curve to curve almost mesh-like, climbing slenderly from beginning to apex, woven in fine rhythm upon a pearl and primrose sunset. The blunt-fingered ash waves supple arms towards you and above; the neighbouring oaks, less disguised by summer's veil than any

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other tree that grows, show forth their native property of strength inflexible, slow of growth and hard of grain. The oak is a fine stalwart tree, but he would seem to be the symbol of another age than this.

To my mind he is of the Middle Ages; he has, in a measure, the remoteness of mediævalism and the majesty. You are too apt to people the sward below his outspreading branches with folk in vair and velvet, and harness of damascened silver and gold, knights in chain-armour, and ladies with the hennin and the côte-hardie, to consider him an intimate. He is rather the ultimate outpost of old romance. And yet the bare hawthorn's twisted maze of gnarled trunk and infinite intricacies of twig and branch — although it reaches out to fancies of an older time, the misty age of myth and legend, murmuring "Broceliande" to you, even as

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grey willows will whisper "Avalon"—the hawthorn, somehow, wears more the aspect of a familiar. While these have their distinct and separate associations, real or imagined, it is the beech that stands for to-day and yesterday and for all time. Clothed with translucent leafage, or stripped, as now, in suave, silvery loveliness, it grows as a gracious monument to the memory of the old beliefs. To this day I find it no easy matter in the depths of a beech wood to disbelieve in Dryads.

All trees have each their proper charm: the orchard-trees are sweet honest country wenches in youth, and bent but still comely and hearty gammers in old age; the silver birch is ever a dainty *ingénue*; the cedar a very noble gentleman, somewhat of a Don Quixote; but the beech is the incomparable lady, the beautiful princess who never grows old, equally beautiful with or without

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her green mantle of leaves, fair alike in winter and in summer.

As I pass through the little belt of wilderness that is all our walled-in space allows for absolute liberty, I surprise many a small secret of the little folk who are wont to pitch their tents there in due season. Secrets of Polichinelle, to-day, but none the less agreeable to me. I like it best for the birds to keep their own counsel while there is need; I would not wittingly betray them, but one never knows. In the pride of my heart, and the expansiveness bred by good company I might blab — and then? No, I want no meddling fingers or prying eyes in my minute preserves. But I like to note, now that all this serious business is over and done with, just where they built, my pleasant little garden-folk, and to see their variously-fashioned nests, so deftly made, and — sometimes — so diplomatically placed.

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The yellow aconite will be flowering under foot here before long with its golden, green-befrilled buds, and the snowdrops that I have been at some pains to naturalise should make a brave show by and by. Overhead there is a continuous soft stir and bustle of birds: the blue and silver tits with their demure black velvet hoods and their elfin airs and graces are mighty busy; up and down and in and out they glance, most delicately important of mien, and I wonder now if this may be the family that was reared last spring in the old leaden urn beneath the large ilex. Very numerous and very vocal was that candid brood; it seemed as though the fledglings were demanding food with menaces the whole day through, and even my own humble wriggling offerings appeared to find favour in their midst. There was a secret so flagrantly open I could not choose but know it, yet I

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do not think they fared any the worse for their indiscretion. Those dainty little brown sprites, the wrens, are full of mysterious activities, and bold robin with his breast at its very brightest orange-tawny meets me at every turn. Fleeting glints of green and gold betoken the shy presence of the finches, and silent thrush and blackbird set about their avocations with an air of hardihood they did not show in spring. The tiny running streamlet is a true benefaction to them all.

On the topmost twig of the walnut-tree balances a huge rook in his solemn black soutane, curtsying and cawing in grotesque protestation. Why he so troubles deaf Heaven with his bootless cries I cannot think, unless it may be from sheer aggrievement at finding all the plunder gone. But I believe it is I, forsooth, who have the better cause of complaint, for he and his gang it was

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that robbed me of at least the half of my harvest this year. Many a strange sacerdotal-seeming feast have I surprised in my own orchard only some half an acre from here, when the nuts were at their best. But some folk have no sense of shame, and it is not the cowl that makes the monk. These gentlemen presume too much upon the sombre propriety of the black robe, I think. Go hunt at the tree-foot, friend, amid the tangled ground ivy and the fallen leaves, and it may chance to you, as often aforetime to me, to find a nut or two still sound and sweet within. It will profit you not one whit to keep curtseying and crying upon the clouds.

"*Qu'est-ce qui passe ici si tard? Gai, gai, gai!*" rings the old rhyme, brought back to mind just now by a lisping, whistling assemblage of shiny-coated starlings engaged in some noisy commerce or other, big with that pose of

THE ROAD TO SPRING

false business habits which could deceive no one, but above all abounding in gaiety. Early or late, the starling is always gay, which is of course to be counted unto him for righteousness. Upon the whole I find my attitude towards him undergoing a gradual change. Time was when I saw nothing but his ill qualities—his vulgarity, his greed, his blatant pushfulness, his friendly toleration of my enemies the sparrows—and could not away with him. But now, even though I may not esteem him more, I am bound to confess to something very like a sneaking affection for that small, smart, rowdy personality of his. “Though a poet”—and a distinctly minor one at that—“he is gay.” He is always gay, even when sentimentalising in song as like the thrush’s as his husky little throat can compass. He is something of an idealist too, the man in the street, as it were, who sup-

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poses he has an ingrained passion for the fine arts; and his admiration of the thrush, who will have none of his company, is sincerity itself. So I have come to look with amused liking upon his clumsy *minauderies*, and to make allowances for his detestably bad manners, the more especially at such moments as when, sauntering between bare orchard trees in the murky glow of a dim red winter sunset, one is suddenly aware of having trespassed upon the blithest company in the world. There is such a clicking of castanets, such a ploy of light-hearted, stammering gossip, such liquid, sibilant calls and cries that you might well think to have stumbled upon another Goblin Market. The starling is certainly a scandal-monger, and probably a knave, but he is a merry soul and the cheeriest of company.

The hoar frost and the snow have been weaving their white

THE ROAD TO SPRING

magic over the garden, a wonder that never stales, but would seem to hang out fresh signals to the sense at every visitation. When you awake in the clear shining of the sun to discovery of the night's enchanted work, wrought with such swiftness, in such silence, it is as though you walked in a new world, in some strange kingdom of faëry with trees of silver and flowers and fruits of diamond and pearl. Every foot's pace bears you on to more revelations in this enchanted pleasaunce. Winter is indeed a rare artificer: there is not a leaf, or a blade, or growing spray or mass of plant-forms that he does not take pains to transfigure almost out of all knowledge. This is surely the apotheosis, the magic hour of every humble unblossomed herb and green thing the garden grows. Spring and summer may bring no largesse for these, autumn no splendid stains and dyes; but here is win-

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ter, another King Cophetua, one might say, scattering his jewels broadcast with so royal a bounty that each unconsidered twig, each sober leaf of evergreen, is clothed with glories as great as, or greater, than the rose. Where there is already, as in the clustered ivy or Portugal laurel, a fine grace of outline and of form, it is intensified and made manifest a thousandfold; while, so marvellous is this pure wealth of pearl and crystal set against the sun's clear gold, that it obliterates imperfection and exalts the commonplace. The scentless yellow jasmine trails upon the trellis like frosted amber, the dark leaves of the hellebore gleam all bediamonded about their pale roses. As I pass my herb-plot's bejewelled tangle, forgotten and left to wildness in the press of other work, I cannot find it in my heart to repent my omission, for had it been properly "redd up" and set in due order I must

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needs have missed this faint, sweet incense, the ghost of a perfume, that breathes from it to-day. How and why I know not, but some mysterious alchemy of sun and snow has drawn forth a fragrance of myrrh and thyme commingled, that sets you thinking of Solomon's Song and the beds of spices when the wind blew from Lebanon.

Dante, whose spirit was of the South, pictured a glacial place of terror, and his image of it is horrid enough, in all conscience. It smites imagination into shuddering, like some dreadful tale of Arctic desolation, or sinister histories of frozen ice-bound ships on the high seas. And yet, and in spite of all human fears and quakings ever inspired by the inhuman sovereignty of the great cold, is there not to us of Northern ancestry, of mainly Northern blood, a something that goes out joyously, with a sting, too, of recognition, to the

THE ROAD TO SPRING

frank, shrewd weather and the first snowfall? It is, in all likelihood, a blind survival of an ancient and outworn instinct originally barbarous of character, compact of the joy of battle and the bitter pleasure of resistance, the strong will to live, in short, now merged in milder sentiments — flushed warm with the colours of the sunset and stirred sharply by the white unearthly beauty of the frost. The great post-mundane glories of a new heaven and a new earth were prefigured by an oriental imagination, but from the pictorial point of view I think a visionary might build Paradise enough from a snow-clad garden-close and a fair sky. “And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” That is the gold of winter itself, gold of ice and sunlight, pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

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My hellebores have not disappointed me this year, and those which I protected are of especial excellence and purity of colour; the milk-white are my favourites still, but the softly empurpled blossoms, as well as those that blush with a delicate pink through their petals of snow and ivory, are mighty pretty, and welcome beyond words at this season of flowerless parterres. It is pleasant to see the strong blunt buds pushing their way up through the dun earth and the snow to the light of day amid those dark sentinels, their leaves. It is yet another assurance of life's persistency, of the robust and vigorous striving of the earth. I believe, for all the pains and penalties involved, that I should be something loth to miss winter from the year's calendar. There is so much that is comely and reviving in the atmosphere, which is essentially that of hope, however long de-

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ferred; memories of spring and summer take on a greater glory viewed through this lengthening vista. You are not burdened with that spendthrift consciousness that will sometimes fall upon you in the very heyday of the prime, of being in the act of consuming your substance with vivid improvidence, forced, it is true, but improvidence all the same.

Winter can show a kindlier face than one guesses, and when, like the unthrifty Lord of Linne, you may have fancied you were come to the end of your wealth, he is apt to offer you an undreamed-of hoard, the beaten gold and "the white mony" that are to console you for treasure spent. So long as one may have sight of the sun for a few hours on most days, and keep a bright hearth withindoors, I do not think we are so very hardly used; the pleasures of retrospect hang the long galleries sacred to their use with arras of unfading

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beauty, while who but Hope could make the corridors of the future to flower so wondrous sweet and fair? We look before and after, and take heart afresh for the journey, perhaps even with an impulse to sing upon the way. Of all the many great and gracious sayings that "R. L. S." has left us, there is not one truer to my mind than this (which comes, I think, in his "El Dorado"), that "to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive."

In the garden every portent points to hopeful travel: such roses as are more sensible to cold are safely swaddled in russet withered bracken, cut down long since for their winter negligées; some pampered favourites have even been given little conical peaked head-pieces of straw that make them look in the late twilight, when the moon is rising, like a witches' gathering in miniature. The rosemary is decked with her

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small wan florets, and the laurustinus spreads its dull waxen umbels in the shrubbery above the shallow graves where the dead leaves lie buried. *Que la terre leur soit légère!* In but a very few months' time primroses will be flowering where they fell, arising in due season to play, these also, their little part in the immemorial game of life and death.

The sundial of grey stone stands like a monument and pledge of summer upon the sunken lawn between the high walls that engirt the rose-garden. The reigning season has despoiled it of the greater portion of its grateful task, and here it stays awaiting the sun's pleasure. "So flys Time away" is the quiet legend it holds up to the light, and I do not believe its long-dead maker could have hit upon a better one. Only to con it over is to invite serenity and the gracious influences of the sun, to see all things in so

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mild and equable a light as leaves no room for trouble or unrest. How well Charles Lamb interpreted the true sentiment of the dial!

“What a dead thing,” says he, “is a clock, with its ponderous embowelments of lead and brass, its pert or solemn dulness of communication, compared with the simple altar-like structure and silent heart-language of the old dial! It stood as the garden god of Christian gardens. . . . It spoke of moderate labours, of pleasures not protracted after sunset, of temperance, and good hours. It was the primitive clock, the horologe of the first world.”

At all times and seasons and in all weathers it pleases me to walk here; disquietude could find no finer antidote, believe me, than the green confines of this narrow pleasaunce with its garden god

THE ROAD TO SPRING

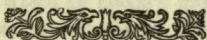
dumbly eloquent of happy patience and the spirit of ancient peace. "So flys Time away" . . . the words to me seem the very epitome of composure and pleasant cheer, perhaps because I have known them for so long, scanned them so very often. Swift's friend and patron, Sir William Temple, so willed it that when he came to die his heart should be buried, enclosed in a silver box, beneath the sundial in his beautiful Surrey garden by his house of Moor Park, and in the end his wish was piously fulfilled. The desire may possibly smack of fantastic sentimentality to some, but I think I understand the impulse that inspired it. The romantic expression of yesterday took other forms than those we know now. "So flys Time away," and yet . . . and yet, where your treasure is there will your heart be also; and who shall say whether the garden-lover's treasure may not be about

THE ROAD TO SPRING

the turfy precincts of his dial in
the green depths of his garden?

ROSAMUND MARRIOTT WATSON





QUEEN MARY'S CHILD- GARDEN





QUEEN MARY'S CHILD- GARDEN

IF any one wants a pleasure that is sure to please, one over which he needn't growl the sardonic beatitude of the great Dean, let him, when the Mercury is at "Fair," take the nine A.M. train to the North, and a return ticket for Callander, and when he arrives at Stirling, let him ask the most obliging and knowing of station-masters to telegraph to "the Dreadnought" for a carriage to be in waiting. When passing Dunblane Cathedral, let him resolve to write to the *Scotsman*, advising the removal of a couple of shabby trees which obstruct the view of that beautiful triple end-window which Mr. Ruskin and everybody else admires, and by the time he has written this letter in his mind, and turned the

QUEEN MARY'S CHILD-GARDEN

sentences to it, he will find himself at Callander and the carriage all ready. Giving the order for the *Port of Monteith*, he will rattle through this hard-featured, and to our eye comfortless village, lying ugly amid so much grandeur and beauty, and let him stop on the crown of the bridge, and fill his eyes with the perfection of the view up the Pass of Leny—the Teith lying diffuse and asleep, as if its heart were in the Highlands and it were loath to go, the noble Ben Ledi imaged in its broad stream. Then let him make his way across a bit of pleasant moorland—flushed with maiden-hair and white with cotton-grass; and fragrant with the *Orchis conopsea*, well deserving its epithet *odoratissima*.

He will see from the turn of the hillside the Blair of Drummond waving with corn and shadowed with rich woods, where eighty years ago there was a black peat-

QUEEN MARY'S CHILD-GARDEN

moss; and far off, on the horizon, Damyat and the Touch Fells; and at his side the little loch of Ruskie, in which he may see five Highland cattle, three tawny brown and two brindled, standing in the still water—themselves as still, all except their switching tails and winking ears—the perfect images of quiet enjoyment. By this time he will have come in sight of the Lake of Monteith, set in its woods, with its magical shadows and soft gleams. There is a loveliness, a gentleness and peace about it more like “lone St. Mary’s Lake,” or Derwent Water, than of any of its sister lochs. It is lovely rather than beautiful, and is a sort of gentle prelude, in the *minor* key, to the coming glories and intenser charms of Loch Ard and the true Highlands beyond.

You are now at the Port, and have passed the secluded and cheerful manse, and the parish kirk with its graves, close to the

QUEEN MARY'S CHILD-GARDEN

lake, and the proud aisle of the
Grahams of Gartmore washed by
its waves. Across the road is the
modest little inn, a Fisher's Tryst.
On the unruffled water lie several
islets, plump with rich foliage,
brooding like great birds of calm.
You somehow think of them as
on, not in the lake, or like clouds
lying in a nether sky — "like ships
waiting for the wind." You get a
coble, and a *yauld* old Celt, its
master, and are rowed across to
Inch-mahome, the Isle of Rest.
Here you find on landing huge
Spanish chestnuts, one lying dead,
others standing stark and peeled,
like gigantic antlers, and others
flourishing in their *viridis senectus*,
and in a thicket of wood you see
the remains of a monastery of
great beauty, the design and work-
manship exquisite. You wander
through the ruins, overgrown with
ferns and Spanish filberts, and old
fruit-trees, and at the corner of
the old monkish garden you come

QUEEN MARY'S CHILD-GARDEN

upon one of the strangest and most touching sights you ever saw—an oval space of about eighteen feet by twelve, with the remains of a double row of box-wood all round, the plants of box being about fourteen feet high, and eight or nine inches in diameter, healthy, but plainly of great age.

What is this? it is called in the guide-books Queen Mary's Bower; but besides its being plainly not in the least a bower, what could the little Queen, then five years old, and "fancy free," do with a bower? It is plainly, as was, we believe, first suggested by our keen-sighted and diagnostic Professor of Clinical Surgery,¹ *the*

1 The same seeing eye and understanding mind, when they were eighteen years of age, discovered and published the Solvent of Caoutchouc, for which a patent was taken out afterwards by the famous Mackintosh. If the young discoverer had secured the patent, he might have made a fortune as large as his present reputation—I don't suppose he much regrets that he didn't.

QUEEN MARY'S CHILD-GARDEN

Child-Queen's Garden, with her little walk, and its rows of boxwood, left to themselves for three hundred years. Yes, without doubt, "here is that first garden of her simpleness." Fancy the little, lovely royal child, with her four Marys, her playfellows, her child maids of honour, with their little hands and feet, and their innocent and happy eyes, pattering about that garden all that time ago, laughing, and running, and gardening as only children do and can. As is well known, Mary was placed by her mother in this Isle of Rest before sailing from the Clyde for France. There is something "that tirls the heart-strings a' to the life" in standing and looking on this unmistakable living relic of that strange and pathetic old time. Were we Mr. Tennyson, we would write an Idyll of that child Queen, in that garden of hers, eating her bread and honey—getting her teaching from the

QUEEN MARY'S CHILD-GARDEN

holy men, the monks of old, and running off in wild mirth to her garden and her flowers, all unconscious of the black, lowering thunder-cloud on Ben Lomond's shoulder.

"Oh, blessed vision! happy child!
Thou art so exquisitely wild:
I think of thee with many fears
Of what may be thy lot in future years.
I thought of times when Pain might be
thy guest,
Lord of thy house and hospitality.
And Grief, uneasy lover! never rest
But when she sat within the touch of thee.
What hast thou to do with sorrow,
Or the injuries of to-morrow?"

You have ample time to linger
there amid

"The gleams, the shadows, and the peace
profound,"

and get your mind informed with
quietness and beauty, and fed
with thoughts of other years, and
of her whose story, like Helen of
Troy's, will continue to move the
hearts of men as long as the grey
hills stand round about that gentle

QUEEN MARY'S CHILD-GARDEN

lake, and are mirrored at evening in its depths. You may do and enjoy all this, and be in Princes Street by nine P.M.; and we wish we were as sure of many things as of your saying, "Yes, this *is* a pleasure that has pleased, and will please again; this was something expected which did not disappoint."

There is another garden of Queen Mary's, which may still be seen, and which has been left to itself like that in the Isle of Rest. It is in the grounds at Chatsworth, and is moated, walled round, and raised about fifteen feet above the park. Here the Queen, when a prisoner under the charge of "Old Bess of Hardwake," was allowed to walk without any guard. How different the two! and how different she who took her pleasure in them!

QUEEN MARY'S CHILD-GARDEN

Lines written on the steps of a small
moated garden at Chatsworth, called

"QUEEN MARY'S BOWER

"The moated bower is wild and drear,
And sad the dark yew's shade ;
The flowers which bloom in silence here,
In silence also fade.

"The woodbine and the light wild rose
Float o'er the broken wall ;
And here the mournful nightshade blows,
To note the garden's fall.

"Where once a princess wept her woes,
The bird of night complains ;
And sighing trees the tale disclose
They learnt from Mary's strains.

"A. H."





BOOKS WE SHOULD READ



"It will be like growing beautiful words," said I, "publishing little books of rose leaves."

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE



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THE literature of gardens is old and yet forever new. A bibliography in itself would fill more than one stately volume. For our present purpose a selected list is nearer the point. Best of all I would cite:

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- II *Essays on Gardens*, with Introduction by A. Forbes Sieveking (In The King's Classics). London, 1908.
- III *Sun-Dials and Roses of Yesterday* by Alice Morse Earle. Illustrated. New York, Macmillan, 1902. See also her *Old Time Gardens*, 1901.
- IV *The Book of Sun-Dials* by Mrs. Alfred Gatty. Fourth Edition enlarged, London, 1900.

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VI THE HON. MRS. BOYLE (E.V.B.).

Ros Rosarum ex horto poetarum, 1885.

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A Garden of Pleasure, 1895.

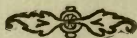
Seven Gardens and a Palace, 1900.

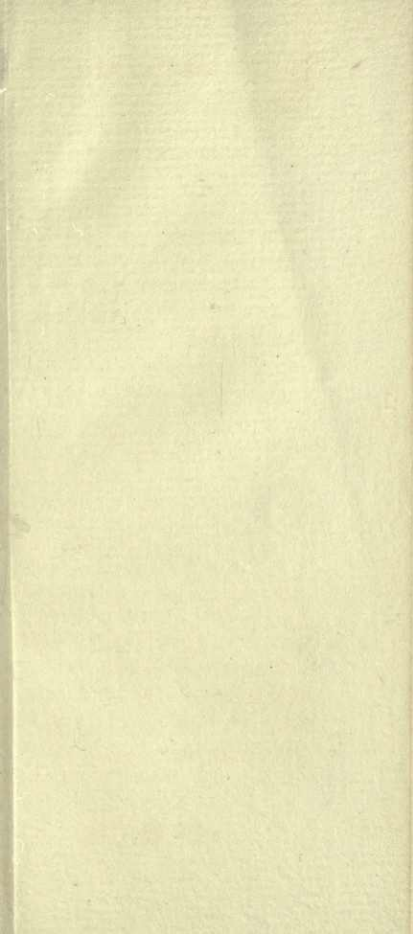
From this last volume we have reprinted *The Praise of Gardens*.

VII *An Old Country House* by Richard LeGallienne, with Illustrations by Elizabeth Shippen Green. New York, Harpers, 1902.

VIII *Gossip About an Old House on the Upper Thames* by William Morris. See his *Collected Works*.

With these books in hand you have a very sufficient collection to carry you into the heart of ever-living summer.





VI. *Arden's Arden*

The Garden of Arden
In Faintest Green
Arden's Garden
Arden's Garden
Arden's Garden
Arden's Garden
Arden's Garden
Arden's Garden

VII. *The Garden of Arden*

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Arden's Garden
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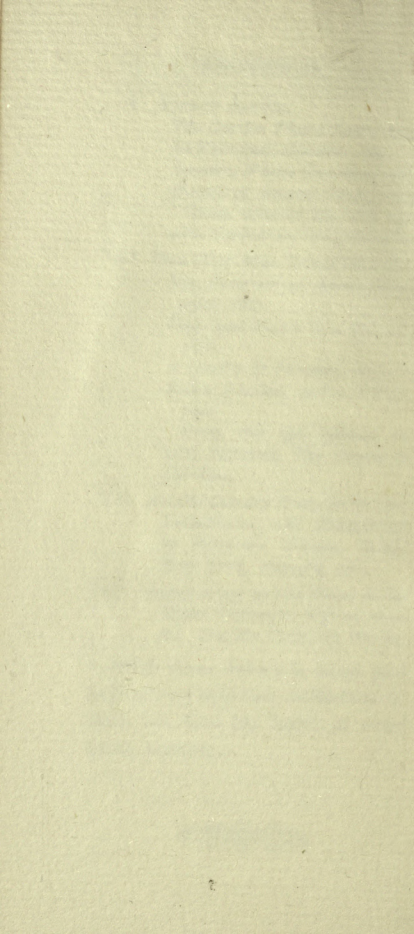
VIII. *An Old Country*

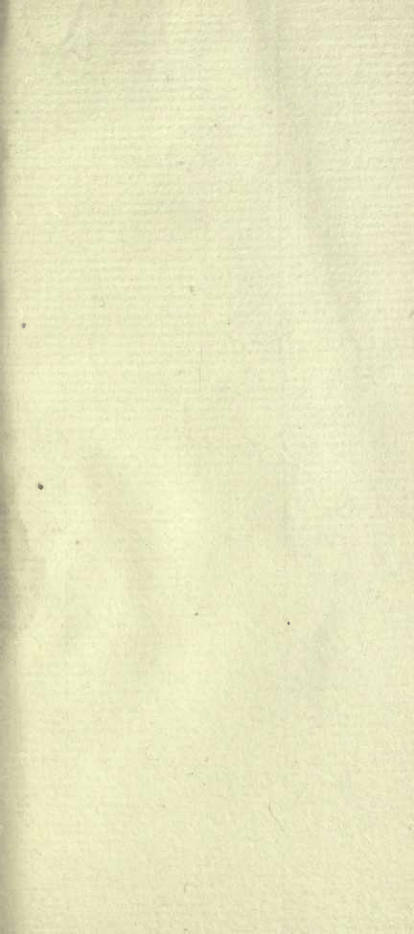
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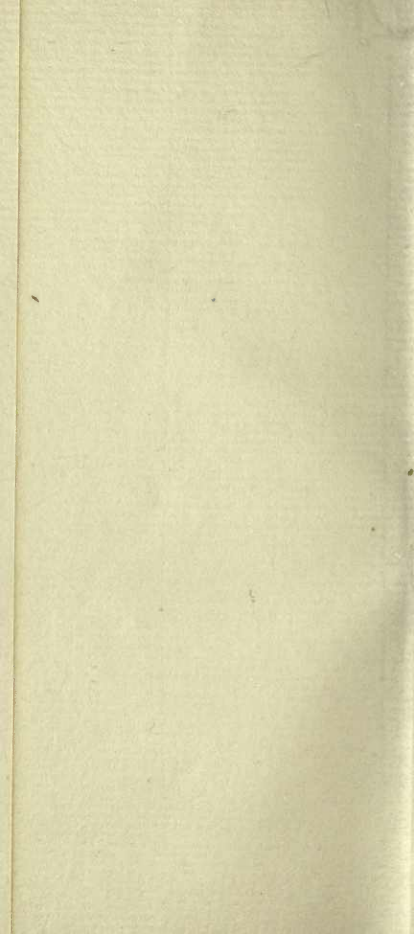
IX. *Arden's Arden*

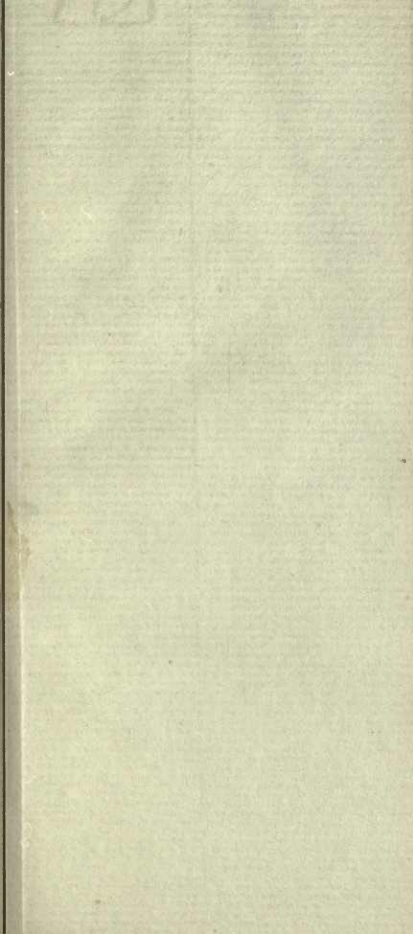
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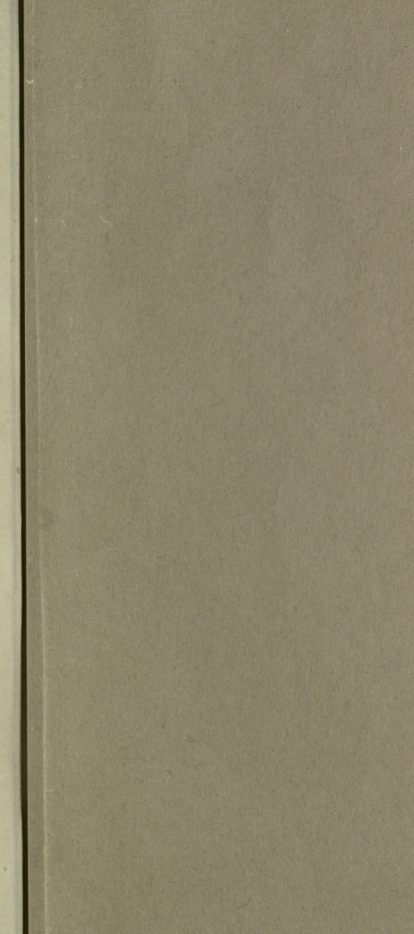
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